

THE SPYING INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Chris Soghoian, whose post on 8 million times the government has used GPS tracking on Sprint's customers in the last year, has apparently flushed out the spying policies of many of the nation's telecoms. Cryptome has them posted—though (as Mary points out) Yahoo has freaked out and initiated take-down proceedings.

Yahoo isn't happy that a detailed menu of the spying services it provides law enforcement agencies has leaked onto the web.

Shortly after Threat Level reported this week that Yahoo had blocked the FOIA release of its law enforcement and intelligence price list, someone provided a copy of the company's spying guide to the whistleblower site Cryptome.

The 17-page guide describes Yahoo's data retention policies and the surveillance capabilities it can provide law enforcement, with a pricing list for these services. Cryptome also published lawful data-interception guides for Cox Communications, SBC, Cingular, Nextel, GTE and other telecoms and service providers.

But of all those companies, it appears to be Yahoo's lawyers alone who have issued a DMCA takedown notice to Cryptome demanding the document be removed. Yahoo claims that publication of the document is a copyright violation, and gave Cryptome owner John Young a Thursday deadline for removing the document. So far, Young has refused.

Meanwhile, Soghoian asked a really interesting question on Saturday:

Nextel charged \$150 per GPS ping in 2002. <http://bit.ly/7hg8Ys> How much did Sprint/Nextel charge for the 8 million pings over the last year?

If Sprint/Nextel's rates last year were what Nextel's were six years ago, then those 8 million pings would have netted them \$1.2 billion.

Sprint's operating revenues in 2008 were \$35 billion. Even if Sprint has lowered its price for GPS pings (doubtful for a company in some trouble, though possible given the way they've automated the process for the government), allowing the government to spy on its customers is still a huge part of its income. And that's not counting the other kinds of spying Sprint facilitates, such as the \$1500 Nextel charged for a pen register (Sprint charged differently in 2002, with \$250 for a pen register or trap and trace within one market, plus \$25 a day after that).

You see, these companies only look like telecom companies. Really, they're telecom and surveillance companies. The question is, how much telecom is it, and how much surveillance?